

**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)
NATIONAL RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL (NRAC)
RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS
FEBRUARY 1, 2018**

Recommendation 1: To address VA's critical shortage of adequate wet-lab research space, the Department should work rapidly to remove the "pre-commitment restriction" currently in place that prohibits VA facilities from entering into agreements to secure research space with research partners at the construction phase. This change will enhance the flexibility of Research and Development field programs and hospital directors to collaborate with their affiliated academic institutions and non-profit corporations on the creation and/or building of new research space that VA might lease, and could be one component of a broader research infrastructure plan for VA Office of Research and Development (ORD). VA should complete this recommendation by January 2020.

VA Response: Concur in principle. VA recognizes the importance of collaborating with research partners to better advance the health care of Veterans. VA will explore options to ensure access to more advanced equipment and facilities, enhance academic and industry collaborations for innovative research, and reduce overall costs.

Recommendation 2: VA Modernization processes should modify the organizational reporting structure for ORD and Academic Affairs' Chief Officers to report directly to the Under Secretary for Health (USH) as has been the case in the past. VA should complete this recommendation through Modernization implementation plans in 2019.

VA Response: Non-Concur. VA recognizes the importance of aligning program offices responsible for key statutory missions at the highest levels of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The Secretary is steadfast in his support of VA's research mission and clinical education mission. VA is currently implementing an extensive modernization plan of the VHA Central Office. ORD will be prominently realigned to assure agency support of the research mission.

Recommendation 3: The Technology Transfer Program (TTP) should work to immediately hire five additional Technology Transfer Specialists (TTS) to increase TTP to ten TTS. This will improve technology transfer services to the various research facilities and innovation initiatives across the Department, maximizing the technology transferred/licensed to the private sector to provide better products and services to Veterans and the American Public, bolstering revenue into VA to fund additional research. VA should complete this recommendation by September 2019 and annually publish revenue results by December of each year.

VA Response: Concur. VA understands the need to hire five additional TTS. VA is currently processing the job announcement to hire three additional TTS and a database manager by the end of 2018. VA will reevaluate staffing needs after the four additional employees have been in place for 6 months.

Actions to Implement:

VA Action Plan– NRAC Recommendations, February 2018						
Steps to Implement Recommendation	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
<p>Recommendation 1: Remove the “pre-commitment restriction” currently in place that prohibits VA facilities from entering into agreements to secure research space with research partners at the construction phase.</p>	Office of Research and Development		ORD will coordinate with the Office of Legislative Affairs to develop a Legislative Proposal.	FY2020	Ongoing FY 2019-2020	Marisue Cody, ORD, 202-461-5681
<p>Recommendation 2: Modify the organizational reporting structure for ORD and Academic Affairs’ Chief Officers to report directly to the Under Secretary for Health (USH).</p>	Office of the Under Secretary for Health (USH)			FY2019	Ongoing FY 2018	Marisue Cody, ORD, 202-461-5681
<p>Recommendation 3: The Technology Transfer Program (TTP) should work to immediately increase staff to provide improved technology transfer services to the various research facilities and innovation initiatives across the Department to maximize the technology being transferred/licensed to the private sector in order to provide better products and services to Veterans and the American Public and bolster revenue into VA in order to fund additional research.</p>	Office of Research and Development	USH	ORD will coordinate with the office of the USH to secure the Hiring Exemption approval, then work with HR to hire additional staff.	FY2018	Ongoing FY 2018	John Kaplan, ORD, 202-632-7271